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Bard

THE MESSENGER

Tight excitement wants to do.

But who are you

chesting in my east,

come to me as a voice

in night trees,

because the church is locked

but the organ's playing,

the dancers try to make it to dawn

but even summer nights are long

and things pierce us.

It was your voice, I swear it,

how can you dream a telephone

or answer a mosquito

buzzing in a little northern city?

Bars close, dancers drunk or sleeping.

Things settle down. Foxes

think about breakfast. Irregular nouns

form their plurals in ways you don't expect.

I dreamt a windmill

was busy in my hands

and deep inside a tiny peasant girl

sifted yellow barley on the stones

that turned her white as I watched

and the wind spun this pinwheel machinery

hard in my hand, like a breath

blowing a mosquito off my wrist
trying not to kill.

And I held
everything, and everything turned.

Was it a book or a broken cup?
Let me read you as if you were a thing
then you read me and we are done.
Or one. Or one at least of us can wake
out of the crowded imagery of God's own dream.

10 August 2002

THE WAYS OF LIGHT

Staring at the postcard of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Saint Petersburg I realize several things.

The Russians do not change the light. In the great lantern beneath the highest dome, uncolored glass lets the blue sky through. Sudden light, sky's light, God's presumed light comes through the artifice of wall. The walls themselves are densely figured, brightly colored, saints and angels, patterns and symbols. But the glass is clear. What a sacrilege it must have seemed to them, to chance the light itself, the sky god's everlasting, inexhaustible gift.

And then I thought of the stained glass windows of the cathedrals of Western Europe. The lost and secret processes by which a blue came, blue of Mary and the heart of matter, mother itself, bluer than the sky, and the reds that are more crimson than Christ's blood pouring down the cross. How strange the alchemists were, who made those shocking magnificences of colored windows, windows that revised the world, that raised the light to a higher power. Strange their art, or some stranger, never-named science behind it, al-Khem, the work of Egypt, the work that finds the dark heart of the light itself. How deeply alchemy made its mark on the Western windows, orgasms of light in dull stone walls.

To change the light itself, to inflect it with the colors of our will, a process we intuited in the secret chambers of natural event, we imitated it, we extracted it from nature's time, and made our own time with it and in it, our fire, what they called the fire of the wise, our own slow heat, we cooked the glass and cooled it at the chosen moment, the willed moment. We made the light our own.

So in those dark naves we grew a great glass rose, a godly sunrise in the west, *contra naturam*. Against nature our alchemy strove, our cathedrals spring

from our given places, fen of Ely, plain of Chartres, spring into the air as if we meant to rescue God from nature, that busy usurper of the divine Idea.

And this bright red brick Russian church, called by a local name that means "The Blood of Christ Poured Out," was built only at the end of the nineteenth century, by an architect, Parland his name, who certainly knew the windows of France. Here he was at the end of the whole process, Byzantium and Romanesque and Gothic and Cistercian, he knew how to hold them together, plausibly, fantastically, and knew that a Russian church is built to change the landscape, bring the people near the blood of Christ. And knew enough to leave the sacred light alone.

10 August 2002

VARIATION

A leaf
in the roof dance

hornet wind
to remember
some coming

a shadow
holds nothing back.

10 August 2002

VARIATION, 2

What I am hiding
from you

I will not tell

sunsets

learning where

rivers turn

10 August 2002

as is

Things that are close
are far
enough

there is an absence
built into
the way

we are interruptions
of someone else
almost here never

2.
what can I do
with your voice
in my head

telephone abattoir
a father's vengeance
set against

miracle gravel
bruises of
our kind of.

3.

into the day
an hour
abandons ship

suddenly the time
of work is gone
and work undone

a lucid animal
explains us
with its fangs.

4.

beast
to be
as it is

not other
truthlessly
me

because it waits
in me
for something else

always coming
up the stairs
it never

knocks it always
palms the door
open slowly

it is all around
my bed it says
it is the night

it was wet there
with the stars
they suddenly

remembered me.

5.
where did you learn
to speak

the chemicals of names
into my poor empty
saucepan

set the spark
inside the pot
and watched me foam

into the myriad
mornings of identity
signing my name

to everything
and calling yours
out everywhere

a year and a day
through the intricate
silences of

ordinary space.

11 August 2002

You gave me everything

I gave you nothing

it seems a fair exchange

morning has such empty hands.

11 August 2002

ONCE

you used to write
down what I said

when a word was
as good as a mile

and we went there together
to a city the other

side of war
the interruptions

were an oil
we slipped against

each other easily
otherwise

still hearing distant fire.

11 August 2002

Weapons are only pretexts.

Listen to what the sword sings
or any knife
its flying patchwork of edges
needs to cut

and you need this curious incision.

12 August 2002

(dreamt, woke repeatedly to recall)

TRACES OF THE PRIMITIVE

accumulation meant
to solve. Solve me,
a Lacan in Keynesland with the slope
of personal desire graphing
mute catastrophes in the public sphere,
everything I want is bad for you

for both of us the fact, since need is anger
and hope is a nun, a pale passion in the wish,

every transaction betrays. That is the answer.
Pure money of mental salient
in the grim evidences of denial.

I was the beacon
from your balcony
or liar in jeopardy
or your last chance
a fact, Mundesley
over the North Sea.

Admiral Nelson. The desire
for money is a private lust
and innocent as lust can be,
one is the first victim
of one's own cupidity, live
accordingly, he died at sea,

the poet Cowper suffered here

because this little town is the whole earth,
we live impostorly
breaking crusts with toothless millionaires
or is that an old factory window
smashing by itself to let the moonlight in

over the plain of ruined bicycles?
And I thought this was a dream.

2.

Woke too early
the rest
still not up

by the time they wake
to business
I'll be dreaming

at the mercy
of their greed
I am too

tired to sleep.

3.

Put a star here
to mark
where the map ran out

wolf eyes
where a car
drove into the trees

its chrome pretenses
catch moonlight
I walk the other way

animals come
in all degrees of carbon
thank the road

there is always
a way to spare
in this contingency

4.

I think back on Farley's sister

pale ardent Madeleine
she could have been the way
for someone to get out

she was an avenue
I think of philosophers
in their dreary Bronx

looking up at their sisters
rarely, I think of me
remembering so many

and none of them sisters
why couldn't a girl
be a girl and a road be a road

5.
it's only in the sketches
that Church's pictures come alive

my god that Greenland ice
a square foot of utter seeing
later narcotized in oil

6.
if we could move into the design
itself and leave space free to *move*

just install a cloud above your head
and call this shadow fall your house

sadhu privacy, naked in plain air

7.

inhabitants of flow

writing is like sleep
except you never wake

only pass into the dreamless
enterprise of everyday

8.

could it be a broken valve
the English used to call
the vacuum tubes that ran
their nice old radios
warm to the touch
cold mornings all that music
gone.

Valve, from Latin
valva, panel of a door

the doors all closed at once

9.

how many near me
the grand design
accommodating no one

in Asia saw no one
worse than myself
and story telling

makes us envious
to live a life
not ours not ever us

10.

so I will not think it
and these
are the desperate traces

of avoided thought.
A park in Northampton
to think of instead

meager and pretty
with a peacock caged
and a raccoon cage

with no raccoon.

11.

afraid to love birds
as much as I do

it is the *cancellation*
of all other things

they bring in
on the wing

suddenly
with color and a cry.

12 August 2002

INSTRUMENT

This thing I want to conceive
was a thought in the bush
where nothing in particular
waited for my head to empty
of what it usually thought

and there I was
baldheaded as a bad idea
midnight all around me its sweaty hands

and so on, what could I do
to answer
the voice that didn't even deign
to ask the least of things
of me

though I was wearing my godly uniform
and all my lusts were in their cage asleep.

12 August 2002